Campground Business Profile

This profile has been compiled as a source of information for those who may be considering campground operation as a commercial venture. The focus of this profile is to give those who are potential or current campground owners / developers an insight into management issues related to the operation of a campground. This report is just the beginning of your research and is not a complete assessment of all the risks involved. This should not be considered a substitute for a business plan.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, the reader should always verify the information.

Background

- The camping experience and associated level of service, types of overnight options, design of sites, variety of amenities, and length of stay continues to change.
- Camping continues to take on more of a destination resort appearance, catering to Recreational Vehicles (RV's) as second homes, retirement homes and group recreation outings.
- Campgrounds are operated by National Parks, Provincial Parks and municipalities, or they are commercially leased/owned.
- As of December 2000, there are about 725 approved campgrounds in the Province of Alberta. These locations range in size from 10 sites to over 350.
- As of March 2001, approximately 361 RV campgrounds representing 33,589 sites exist in Alberta.
- The average size of an RV campground in Alberta is 93 units. However, the range is significant. National park campgrounds average 179 units, while Club owned sites average 51 units. Private operators average 95 units per site.
- To get an idea of how many approved campgrounds are in your area, consult the Campground Accommodation Guide available from the Alberta Hotel Association.
- Traditionally, there have been two types of campgrounds:
  1. ***Destination Campgrounds***: Located in a resort area. Usually near major attractions (i.e. major tourist destination), fully equipped with all necessary amenities for a possible long-term stay, or for seasonal occupation.

  2. ***Enroute Campground***: Cater to those looking for a place to stop for the night while touring the area. Located within a short distance of a major tourist route (i.e. Access to the site is available from a major highway), generally offer basic facilities for overnight stays, clients are shorter term, transient campers.

- Campgrounds are classified into one of four categories based upon the services they have:
  1. Serviced
  2. Semi-Serviced
  3. Basic
  4. Primitive

- Specific requirements necessary to meet each classification can be obtained from the *Minimum Standards for Approved Campgrounds* document (available through the Alberta Hotel Association (AHA). For information on development that goes above and beyond the required standards *(this could be the key to attracting more customers)*, refer to the *Standards for RV Parks and Campgrounds, 1999 Edition* document (available through the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA). *These documents are listed in the resources section at the end of the profile.*
  - An example of the sections involved in the minimum standards for Serviced sites include:
    - Site planning and improvements
    - Roadways, walkways and lighting
    - Service and auxiliary buildings
    - Washroom fixture requirements
    - Water supply and sewage disposal
    - Hot water demand rate allowances
    - Refuse handling and disposal
    - Electrical services
    - Playgrounds
    - Maintenance

- Most campground owners do not have the resources to contract others to manage and care for their property. As a result, a campground owner must be able to be a 'Jack of all trades'. Some of these skills include:

  - Carrying out equipment, electrical, and plumbing repairs on your property.
  - Painting and grounds work.
  - Ability to assess the market demand for the product.
  - Being able to differentiate your product.
  - Taking an unsatisfied customer and making them happy and glad that they came to your campground.
  - Bookkeeping and cash flow management.
  - Creating partnerships with other business owners.
  - Promotion of your property.

- When determining if the campground industry is for you, consider your answers to the following questions:
  - Do your personal objectives fit with the lifestyle of a campground operator?
  - Do you have the business management and administrative skills necessary to become a successful campground operator?
  - What is the expected return on investment?
  - Have you thought about the possibility of financial loss?
  - How will you generate both the short and long term financial gains you expect from this operation?
  - Do you have an adequate working knowledge of the campground business?
  - Can you access the required financial capital to construct and start-up your campground?

Market Feasibility

- Prior to any investment or construction, a feasibility study should be completed. This study will help you determine if the business has the chance to be successful or not. These studies try to answer these questions:

  - Do a sufficient number of people demand a campground?
  - What competing facilities are in the area?
    - Have they been successful?
    - What has their performance been over the past 5 years? 10 years? 15 years?

- Are these private or public facilities?
- Are these facilities serviced or not serviced?

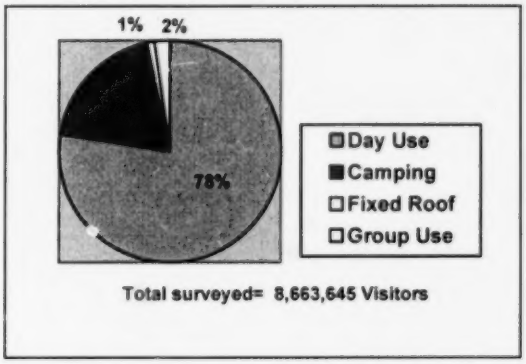
- What is the nature of the tourist traffic in the area?
  - Who visits?
  - How many?
  - How long do they stay?
  - What services do they require?
  - What are the recent trends?
  - What are the growth forecasts? (Is the total camping market in your area/region increasing or decreasing in size?) If the total market "the pie", is increasing in size, you have a greater chance to carve out a piece of the pie for your operation.
- What are the current occupancy rates of campgrounds with similar facilities and sites?
  - Are you able to meet or exceed these rates?
- What material do you have that supports your business's ability to bring campers (tourists) to the area?
  - Will campers be interested in your products?
- What revenue centers need to be incorporated?
- How will your campground be able to generate profits in the short and long run?

◆ Sites that do make a profit have several important factors in common. These include:
- Higher than average occupancy rate levels.
- Multiple sources of income (boat / bike rentals, tours, laundry, minigolf, RV servicing).
- Sound business practices—annual budgets, revenue targets and cost controls.
- They usually offer other types of accommodation (fixed roof, cabins) nearby.

◆ Occupancy rates for campgrounds vary based on a number of situations; the following are only a few of those factors:
- Location
- Number of sites
- Weather
- Services offered
- Level of competition

◆ As indicated by the Alberta Provincial Parks and Recreation area summary for 1997-1998, the regional averages for July-August occupancy percentage for Provincial Parks in Alberta ranged between 33 per cent – 50 per cent.
- For a more in-depth look at occupancy rates at Provincial Parks in Alberta, please refer to: www.gov.ab.ca/env/parks/parkinfo/

Figure 1
Campground Use Statistics for Alberta Provincial Parks 1998-1999



(Alberta Environment, 1999)

◆ As indicated in Figure 1, the majority of the 8.6 million visitors surveyed use Provincial Park campgrounds in Alberta on a day use basis.

- Day use revenue sources could include:
  - Day use admission fees.
  - Rental of group areas (birthdays, reunion, etc.).
  - Programming and services related to group area rentals (Party plans, decorations).
  - Reservations for picnic shelters or group tents.
  - Concession/snack shop.

Are these private or public facilities?
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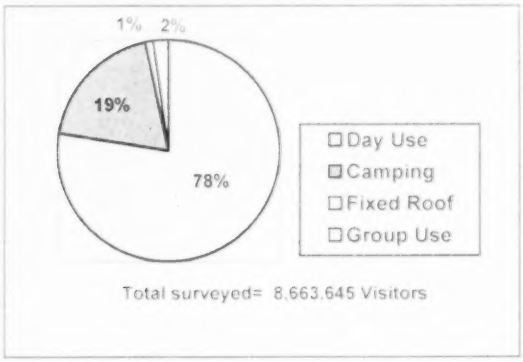

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    - Reservations for picnic shelters or group tents.
    - Concession snack shop.

- Equipment rental (bikes/roller blades/boats/etc.).

Locations near water or scenic areas may be of interest to many people. As a result, you could end up with another source of revenue from reserving these sites.

- Traffic count information is available from Alberta Transportation at: http://www.infras.gov.ab.ca/Content/doctype181/production/hnp004.htm.

- If you are going to operate a campground, it is important to have knowledge of camping markets and the trends in these markets.

Market Segments

- Potential market segments that are available to campground owners are illustrated in Table 1. In addition, the types of services that are likely expected by people in these target markets are provided in this table.

Market Trends

- Generations of baby boomers are retiring at an increasing rate.
  - As a result, there will be a change in the demographics of campers in the province. In order to capture this market, your site must have the facilities that people in that market demand and require.

- There is a steady increase in the number of recreational vehicles sold in the US and Canada, which has resulted in the need for more campsites that are able to accommodate recreational vehicles.
  - Provincial campground information shows that over 70 per cent of campers arrive in some form of RV.
    - For private campgrounds this figure is closer to 100 per cent.
  - RV rental markets should also be considered. Why?
    - Potential first time RV owners may rent first to help decide if they enjoy the experience. This would be an opportunity to gain a new client;
    - Fly—Drive markets from other provinces / countries are increasing; and
    - RV rentals have experienced double digit growth rates.
  - A market of US travelers exists, who own their own RV's, and travel the Province of Alberta. This group has several reasons for travelling to Alberta:
    - A multi-province touring trip.
    - On their way to or from Alaska.
    - Tour of Alberta.
  - Campers increasingly want to combine their camping experience with other outdoor activities – e.g. hiking, biking, fishing, swimming, boating, and cultural/interpretive learning experiences.

Product Trends

- Recreational Vehicles:
  - Now up to 65 feet in length;
  - RV's are becoming "full service cottages" on wheels. More and more have incorporated regular items from home into entry level RV's. Items include:
    - Television
    - Surround stereo sound
    - Cable hookup
    - Microwave

Table 1:
Possible Campground Market Segments

Market Segment	Examples	Facilities/ Services Required
Demographic	Families	-Playground -Pool/Beach -Equipment rental -Laundry -Recreation -Washrooms / Showers -Day care
	Seniors Groups use e.g. Scouts or other large groups	-24 hour security -Full services -Laundry -Services for Handicapped -Washrooms / Showers -Special programming -Group camping sites (Interpretive programs) -Cooking shelters for large meal preparation
Purpose of Trip	Enroute Campers	-Nearby amenities (store, gas, etc) -Washrooms / Showers
	Destination Campers	-Store -Playground -Pool -Laundry facility -Washroom / Showers –Marina -Lake/Beach/River -Concession/snack shop -Rental equipment
Type of Camping	Tenting	-Tent sites -Picnic tables -Washrooms / Showers - Cooking Shelters
	Tent Trailers	-Picnic Tables -Washroom/Showers -Drive-thru sites -Power Hook Ups
	Fifth Wheelers / Trailers	-Drive-thru sites -Power hook ups -Level sites -Picnic tables -Washrooms / showers
	Motorhomes	-Service sites with power, water and sewer -Large sites -50 amp service -Laundry -Dump stations -Picnic tables -Level sites -Recreation facilities

Special considerations for all market segments:

- Developers should consider facility design features that meet the special needs of handicapped/mobility impaired individuals.
- Garbage containers and firewood/pits will be required.
- Tourist information should be provided.

(Adapted from Tourism Development Branch Staff; Government of Canada; Crapo Study)

- Recreational Vehicles (Continued):
  - Convection ovens
  - Washer and dryer
  - Dishwasher
  - Showers
- Residential RV parks with full services, community centers and full amenities continue to attract a large amount of interest.

- Unique experiences:
  - In general, people want to have experiences that are differentiated in some way.
  - Consider what resources you have (contacts / partnerships/ programming / facilities) that will make your campground unique and therefore more desirable than your competition.

- Campgrounds are more than just a place to pitch a tent. Most now accommodate, or are planning for the following in one way or another:
  - Good quality, clean sites
  - Sites for Recreational Vehicles
    - including power and water hookups
  - On-site stores
  - Chopped firewood
  - Swimming areas
  - Walking/biking trails
  - Group camping
  - Day use facilities
  - Rental opportunities (boat, bike, etc.)
  - Environmental education tours
  - Recreational Programming

Development

Preparation

- Throughout the development process, a developer must fill out numerous forms and supply important information to get approvals. One must be able to provide:
  - Legal description of the property.
  - A copy of the registered title or lease agreement number.
  - Site dimensions—copy of the property plans.
  - A brief written description of the proposed business including hours of operation, the number of employees and the number and type of customers you expect to attract.
  - A diagram showing building sizes and location in relation to property lines. Include any important physical information such as watercourses, easements, rights-of-way, existing land uses, etc.
  - Type of use that will occur on the property.

Site Evaluation

- You need to obtain the following information on the potential site in order to help assess it completely:
  - Suitability of the physical environment, including soils, slopes, amount of snow and rainfall *(these will help to determine where potential erosion, drainage and possible flooding may occur on the property)*, water quality and quantity, tree cover, shoreline access, views, odors, noise, adjacent land use and the direction of prevailing winds.
  - Status of the site in terms of ownership of the land, zoning, easements, long-term planning projects, caveats, and restrictive covenants.
  - Servicing and utilities—water, power, sewer, telephone, natural gas.
  - Access—special facilities needed, maintenance responsibility.
  - Land development requirements – clearing, grading, reclamation, engineering.
  - Location analysis:
    - Does the location meet the needs of the target market?
    - Are there any local attractions nearby that may increase the number of potential campers during a particular time of year? Is it a tourist location?

- Are there nearby towns, cultural interest points, recreation areas, or major roadways that could act as support systems for your business?
- Are any similar developments planned in the area for the near future? If so, how will this affect your business?
- Access/location to major highways/tourism cooridors?

◆ Your development may require professional engineering or geo-technical evaluation to determine feasibility and servicing costs.
- Proposals which are either very large or may have significant environmental impacts may be required to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or an Historical Resource Impact Assessment (HRIA). Contact Alberta Environment early in your development process to determine whether or not an EIA or an HRIA is required.

◆ A potential campground owner must decide if he should buy an existing campground, build a new one from scratch, or operate an existing campground under contract with Alberta Community Development.
- **Buying** an existing facility may have advantages:
  - Less development than building a brand new site.
  - Already established as a good location for campers.
  - Reduces the overall risk because good ties may have already been made with clients, banks, and suppliers.
  - Current client lists could be available.
  - May receive some limited management/operational training from previous owners.
  - To identify campground facilities that are for sale, you may wish to contact a local commercial realtor.
- **Building** a new site also offers advantages:
  - You have the freedom to design the campsite as you see fit. This improves your ability to market to a specific target market. If you purchase an existing business, you have to work with the facilities already in place.
  - New facilities and equipment are guaranteed. This may interest more of your potential clients.
  - You can choose the location.
  - A new site can be built on:
    1. *Private land*
    2. *Crown land* – This involves the Alberta Tourism and Recreation Leasing (ATRL) process. To investigate this option, please refer to http://www.alberta-canada.com/tdb/atrl.cfm
- **Operating** an existing campground under contract with Alberta Community Development.
  - For a listing of available opportunities with Community Development please visit http://www.gov.ab.ca/env/parks.html and click on the opportunities link.

◆ **Franchising** is an option that should also be considered by those interested in campground operations. For information on franchising please visit: http://www.cbsc.org/alberta/businfo_start.cfm and then click on search. Submit 'franchise' as your search term.

◆ As a rule of thumb, each site serviced requires approximately 3600 square feet of land for the actual camping site, and the support items such as roads, buildings, playgrounds and other facilities. This means that if you want a 50 site campground, you will require

approximately 8 acres of land to build your campground and facilities on.
  - Also remember that one-day down the road, you may want to expand or renovate your business. Remember to purchase enough land, or have some available, to allow for this expansion.

- During the planning and development of your campground, you should be aware that the complete development of your campground will not be accomplished in one building stage.
  - Don't expect to have all facilities and services available on opening day.
  - Plan to build in stages. This will allow time to build up some cash reserves so you are able to finance the expansion, renovation, or addition to your campground.
  - Building everything at the same time could result in the failure of your business because the owner has overextended themselves before the campground has had a chance to make any money. You need a cash cushion for the first several months of operation
  - Try to develop your initial plan so that all basic necessities (as identified in the Alberta Hotel Association Minimum Standards) are covered. Then you can work to add the luxury items; keeping in mind that they should be phased in over time.
  - Luxury facilities might include:
    - Boat launches / Rentals
    - Laundry facilities
    - Pool
    - Guided tours

- In summary, when planning your campground, keep the following things in mind:
  - Is your location accessible? Does it meet the needs of the target market? Location of the site is one of the most important factors when developing a campground.
  - Can you obtain the land necessary for a campground?
  - Does your proposal fit within the current bylaws for the area? If not, what will you do to change your project?
  - See Figure 2 for more information.

Figure 2:
Steps involved in Campground Development

1. Define the project and assess the feasibility

- Get all the information you can about the campground industry, understanding the capital costs and equity required (know what equity the bank may expect you to contribute toward the project).
- Visit successful locations and observe best practices.
- Research the product supply, market demand, and feasibility aspects of your proposal.
- Develop a business plan and site plan.
- Discuss your business plan, and other ideas, with campground owners, business planners, and bankers.
- Decide if this is the way you want to go, and establish a project schedule.

2. Review Ideas with the Municipality or the Provincial Department

Your ideas, project schedule, business plan, site drawings, and servicing requirements will need to be discussed with the applicable government agency.

Development on:

Private and Crown land – Requires local Municipality review, regarding:

1. Zoning
2. Development requirements
3. Building guidelines

Crown land – In addition to the local Municipality review, development requires Provincial Land Manager review, relative to:

1. Land leasing process
2. Any addition Provincial government requirements

3. Consult the groups involved in the Specific Planning of your Facility

- Dept. of Sustainable Resource Development (for development on public lands in *green* and *white* areas)
- Dept. of Environment (for water and sewage)
- Dept. of Health and Wellness (for eating establishments, or swimming pools/hot tub development)
- Dept. of Transportation (road signs and access to your site)
- Local Municipality (zoning; development/building permits; and to provide list of accredited sewage system contractors)

4. Obtain Approvals for Construction (refer to Addendum 1)

The local government will be responsible for issuing most of the approvals required for construction, including:

- Development Permit
- Building Permit
- Septic system appraisals

5. Obtain Occupancy permit from local municipality

6. Alberta Hotel Association Approval

- Minimum standards must be met in order to receive approval and a listing in the provincial guide book.

Addendum 1 Construction Approvals

Development Permit

- The Municipal Government Act (MGA) assigns responsibility for land use planning and development approval to each of the provinces 363 municipalities.
- The Development Permit process addresses how land is used.

Building Permit

- Once a proposed development has received development approval, the proponent may require a Building Permit. A building permit deals primarily with the structural stability of buildings and the safety of the building's occupants and is issued pursuant to the Safety Codes Act and the Alberta Building Code.
- Building permits and related approvals may concern heating and ventilation, plumbing and gas fitting, electrical provision, and water and sewer services.

Occupancy Permit

- Is a requirement in some municipalities.
- Such a permit is used as a final approval, ensuring that all necessary planning and building approvals from municipal and other agencies have been acquired.

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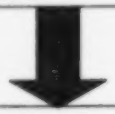

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Financial Planning

- **The following section is meant to act as a guide to the financial requirements you, as a campground owner, could be responsible for. Please consider this a guide only. Check with those listed in the *Need Help?* section for further information.**

  - The financial analysis gives the entrepreneur a detailed picture of the costs involved in starting up the enterprise, annual operating costs, projected income and the means of financing the operation.
  - The analysis will help to determine if the project is financially viable or whether changes need to be made to the concept or financial arrangements.
  - For the new or seasonal type of tourism venture, it is important to compare costs and revenues with other operations in the industry.
  - If you are expanding an existing business you must be sure that increased revenues will cover the costs of your changes.
    - **Most small business failures** are attributed to insufficient working capital to carry the business through its first two years of operation—be realistic and accurate through the financial analysis process!
  - Some of the steps necessary to complete your financial analysis include:
    1. Determine the capital costs associated with your business.
    2. Determine cash flow and working capital situations.
    3. Complete the proforma (projected) income statements.
    4. Figure out how you will finance the venture.
    5. Evaluate the rate of return on your investment and decide how you wish to proceed.

- Ensure that your financial plan contains the necessary financial statements required by a banker or investor.

  - You also may wish to refer to the Tourism Business Planning Guide, available through hard-copy from the Tourism Development Branch, or online at: **http://www.alberta-canada.com/tdb/index.com**

- Campground owners may be required to consider the following capital and operating costs during their planning process:
  - Cost of purchasing land
  - Site preparation and improvements
    - Excavation
    - Leveling and grading
    - Roads and paths
  - Site servicing
    - Water
    - Sewage
    - Power
    - Telephone service
  - Building construction costs
    - Municipal approval fees
    - Materials
    - Trades people to complete the work
    - Building a pool
    - Highway and directional signs
    - Front entrance sign
  - Equipment, furniture, and fixtures
    - Picnic Benches
    - Playgrounds
    - Showers / Washrooms
    - Laundry facility
    - Office
    - Cash registers
    - Computers
  - Legal, engineering, and architectural fees
  - Financing costs
  - Pre-opening day operating expenses
  - Ground maintenance equipment
  - Vehicles
  - Staff training and costs
  - Salaries
  - Interest payments to the bank
  - Incorporation / business licensee fees

- Inventory costs.
- Insurance
- Taxes
- Contingency funds

◆ From the Commercial Recreation Opportunities in Northern Alberta study completed in 1990 by IMC Consulting, the following conclusions were made concerning the development costs for campground sites from scratch:

Full Service Sites:
- Site development — at $6,000 per site
- Infrastructure — at $14,000 per site
- Electricity and water — at $4,000 per site
- **TOTAL — $24,000**

Semi-Serviced Sites:
- Site development — at $6,000 per site
- Infrastructure — at $14,000 per site
- Electricity only — at $2,000 per site
- **TOTAL — $22,000**

Basic Pad Sites (No services):
- Site development — at $6,000 per site
- Infrastructure — at $14,000 per site.
- **TOTAL — $20,000**

Site Development costs include roadways, some parking pads, hiking trails, landscaping, small playground, two vault toilet buildings, and site furnishings.

Infrastructure costs include a small registration / office, shower building, water supply system, sanitary system using septic tanks and field for buildings only, sewage dump station, and a boat launch facility.

Construction of a 75 site campground, evenly split between serviced, semi-serviced, and basic sites would cost upwards of **$1,650,000.**

Remember that the values presented are from 1990. These values are used in order to demonstrate the large capital costs associated with the creation of a campground from the ground up. Talk to your business banker to get information about inflation so that you could use today's values in your business plan.

◆ In order to project site rental revenue, you need four pieces of information:
- Number of sites to be developed.
- Operating period of the campground.
- Site occupancy percentage (derived from market analysis).
- Average site rental fee.

◆ Norms data regarding campgrounds can be obtained from the 1997 Small Business Profiles developed by Industry Canada (http://sme.ic.gc.ca). Please note that the data base allows you to generate norms data at either a national or provincial level. Again the norms provide a rough "ball park figure." They should be used or cross-checked against the other sources previously identified, in order to help you develop operating cost forecasts for your campground operation.

Legal Requirements

◆ The following section highlights some of the legal requirements you will need to consider as a small business owner in addition to the items summarized in the chart *Steps Involved in Campground Development*. ***Please remember that each business is unique. Therefore, treat this list as a general checklist, not as a complete listing.***

◆ **Insurance**
- Commercial General Liability
- Coverage for physical assets (buildings) as well as coverage against damage to those assets.
- May require cash coverage (to protect against theft).
- Business Interruption Coverage
- For premiums check with commercial insurance agents in your area.

- Special cases of insurance coverage (You may have a tour operation requiring a separate form of coverage.)

◆ **Business License**

- Can be obtained through the local municipality or town office.
- Also consider checking with the municipal government for your proposed site, there may be local bylaws that you are unaware of.

Human Resources

- Do you need additional staff to handle different aspects of the operation? Can you afford to hire additional people? If not, can family members provide sufficient "manpower", and are they willing to forgo salaries until such time that the campground is generating a profit?
- Formalize roles & responsibilities in written job descriptions and establish compensation levels for staff.
- Identify staff training requirements. Will there be a cost associated with training?
  - ***See Addendum 2 for more information***

Addendum 2: Professional Development

- If you are interested in further developing your skills as a campground operator, there are many courses available:
  - CampgroundOwners.COM
    http://www.campgroundowners.com/
  - National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds
    http://www.gocampingamerica.com/arvc/
  - School of RV Park and Campground Management
    http://www.oglebay-resort.com/schools/rvpark.htm
  - Professional Development (ATEC): Campground Operator, Standards and Certification
    www.atec.ca

- Special cases of insurance coverage (You may have a tour operation requiring a separate form of coverage.)

◆ **Business License**

- Can be obtained through the local municipality or town office.
- Also consider checking with the municipal government for your proposed site, there may be local bylaws that you are unaware of.

Human Resources

- Do you need additional staff to handle different aspects of the operation? Can you afford to hire additional people? If not, can family members provide sufficient "manpower", and are they willing to forgo salaries until such time that the campground is generating a profit?
- Formalize roles & responsibilities in written job descriptions and establish compensation levels for staff.
- Identify staff training requirements. Will there be a cost associated with training?

See Addendum 2 for more information

Addendum 2: Professional Development

- If you are interested in further developing your skills as a campground operator, there are many courses available:

  CampgroundOwners.COM
  http://www.campgroundowners.com

  National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds
  http://www.gocampingamerica.com/arvc

  School of RV Park and Campground Management
  http://www.oglebay-resort.com/schools/rvpark.htm

  Professional Development (ATEC): Campground Operator, Standards and Certification
  www.atec.ca

- **Other Requirements**
  - Please consult with your lawyer, accountant or other professionals to deal with issues such as:
    - Registration with Revenue Canada before you begin your business.
    - Looking over your business plan to ensure it is accurate and within the law.
    - GST registration.
    - Legal form of your business (partnership, corporation, etc.).
    - Federal and provincial taxes.

Industry Memberships & Sources of Information

- The following organizations and associations are available for campground owners and operators to join, and / or obtain services and information related to the campground industry.

You may wish to become a member of some of these associations or clubs because they may expose you to new ideas, partnerships, or market product concepts related to the campground industry:

- Provincial Campground Operators Association, Site 145 Comp 15 RR2 Rocky Mountain House, AB T4T 2A4
- Alberta Resort and Campground Association
  www.camping.ab.ca
- Association of RV Parks & Campgrounds
  www.gocampingamerica.com
- Camper Clubs of America
  www.camperclubs.com
- Family Motor Coach Association
  www.fmca.com
- Good Sam Club
  www.goodsamclub.com
- Trailer Life Magazine
  www.trailerlife.com
- Woodall's Camping
  www.woodalls.com

These sites are potential sources of trend data:

- Recreational Vehicle Dealers Association (RVDA)
  www.rvda.com
- Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA)
  www.rvia.com
- RV America
  www.rvamerica.com
- RV net
  www.rv.net
- Alberta Economic Development (Statistics and Publications)
  http://www.alberta-canada.com/statpub/

These organizations are potential sources of development and operational information:

- Alberta Camping Association
  780-427-6605
  Email:
  abcamp@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca
- Alberta Hotel Association
  www.albertahotels.ab.ca
- Alberta Recreation and Parks Association
  www.sport.ab.ca
- National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA)
  http://www.activeparks.org/

Marketing Information

Promotional Considerations

- When preparing promotional material for your campground, remember to include:
  - What differentiates your operation from others?
  - The type of business, in terms of RV park, tent campground, family campground etc.
  - The features that make your camp a place people want to go:
    - Pictures that highlight the best features of the site.
    - Types of accommodation
    - Any attractions nearby?
    - Showers or other facilities that are on-site.
  - Your location in reference to other cities, towns, major attractions, and highways
  - Make sure to include special events that happen during the year. This may increase the number of campers for those events.
  - Some manner for the consumer to contact you or get more information (phone, fax, email, website). All of these media would be useful.

- Interested in assistance with your marketing efforts?
  - Where and how should I advertise?
  - Who can I partner with to improve my marketing efforts?
  - What type of media is best for my needs?
  - These organizations are available to help you:
    - Tourism Destination Regions www.tourismtogether.com/tourismweb/organizations/tdr.htm
    - Parcom Travel Marketing www.tourismtogether.com/tourismweb/marketing/parcom.htm

- With the proper record keeping activities, you can complete your own basic market research with very little time or effort. Information from the guest registration card can be used to find out:
  - Number in the camping party.
  - Type of resources needed (RV, tent, power, water, playground, store).
  - Length of stay.
  - Origin of camper, by postal code, city or license plate number.
- The Alberta Resort & Campground Association has a sample of such an evaluation and information gathering tool.

- This information is very valuable as it can help you narrow your target market; making your marketing program more effective in the long run.

Still Interested?

- If you are still interested in pursuing campground ownership you should be answering positively to the following questions:
  - Am I prepared to learn all I can about the campground industry?
  - Will I research and determine who my target market consists of?
  - Do I have the skills to manage debt?
  - Can I secure a loan?
  - Am I able to generate the financial capital necessary to operate a campground?
  - Am I prepared to manage the risks associated with the seasonal nature of a campground operation? There are high and low seasons that must be considered.
  - Am I willing and able to create an up-to-date business plan that lenders and investors will be able to understand?
  - Will I take the time to develop and promote my products?
  - Am I willing to hire, train, and supervise my staff?
  - Am I prepared to partner with regional tourism players to increase the local attraction base?
  - Can I maintain/grow my client base?
  - Will my family support my business endeavor?

- Is there community support for this type of business?

- Your answers to these questions will help you decide if the campground industry is right for you.

Need Help?

- There are many individuals that can assist in your feasibility study or business plan creation:
  - Your business banker
  - Your accountant
  - Operators of non-competing campgrounds
  - A private consultant
  - Alberta Economic Development-Tourism Development Branch http://www.alberta-canada.com/startbus/finance.cfm
  - Business Development Bank of Canada www.bdc.ca;
  - Western Economic Diversification http://www.wd.gc.ca/eng/pos/cbsc/xindex.html www.wd.gc.ca/eng/pos/cfdc/xindex.html
    - *Western Economic Diversification websites will provide you with access to the Canada Business Service Centre and Community Futures offices*
    - *. These two sources provide business advice and sources of information.*

Resources

Arimond, G., and Lethlean, S. (Spring 1996). Profit Center Analysis within Private Campgrounds. Journal of Travel Research. p. 52-58.

Cooper, R, B. (1992). Campground Management: How to Establish and Operate Your Campground. Sagamore Publishing Co. Inc.: Champaign, Illinois.

Crapo, D. (1988). Alberta's Private Campground Industry. EXCELeration Corp.

Ernst and Young (1995). Kananaskis Country: Small, Fixed Roofed Accommodation Study.

Fillman, W. (1990) The First Complete Marketing Guide for Campgrounds. Sagamore Publishing Co. Inc.: Champaign, Illinois.

Government of Canada. (1980). Planning Canadian Campgrounds. Office of Tourism. Ottawa.

IMC Consulting. (1990). Commercial Recreation Opportunities in Northern Alberta., Alberta Economic Development.

Contact Information For Additional Relevant Documents

Alberta Community Development. Listing of Available Opportunities to Operate a Campground Under Contract with Community Development. Contact: (780) 427-3517

Alberta Community Development. Visitation Statistics: Provincial Parks & Recreation Areas 1998/99. Contact: (780) 427-3517

Alberta Hotel Association. Minimum Standards for Approved Campgrounds. Contact: (780) 436-6112

Alberta Transportation. Traffic Count Information, for Statistics at Specific Locations of Concern. Contact: (780) 415-1003

Recreational Vehicle Industry Association. Standards for RV Parks and Campgrounds, 1999 Edition. Contact: www.rvia.com

Includes information on:

- Park design and construction
- Swimming and bathing facilities
- RV stand construction
- Potable water supply and distribution
- Sanitary conveniences
- Sewage facilities
- *Much more*

Resources

Arimond, G., and Lethlean, S. (Spring 1996). Profit Center Analysis within Private Campgrounds. Journal of Travel Research. p. 52-58.

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